

Artists Capture the Human Services Story

By Carol Sisco, Division of Child and Family Services

Tuesday, 15 December 2009 09:42 - Last Updated Monday, 01 February 2010 13:47



David Adams didn't have a clue where his mind and paintbrush would take him when the call came to paint for Human Services and Environmental Quality.

"I work in a spontaneous way," he said. "It was hard to show things up front."

Adams and Yolly Torres were commissioned by the Utah Arts Council to bring life to the walls of the state's new Multi-Agency State Government Office Building under a state program requiring a portion of funding set aside for art in all new public buildings.

Human Services Director Lisa-Michele Church sought Utah artists to provide art for the new building, located at 195 N. 1950 West in Salt Lake City. What she didn't want was a large outdoor sculpture by a more well-known artist.

"I wanted employees to see the art every day, as they worked," she explained. The overall concept was public art using realistic murals and modern pieces to illustrate serving the public.

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Take a walk through the resulting art gallery to see impressionistic paintings of nature and human struggling on the east walls by the main entrance and more realistic scenes of people and nature on “Main Street,” a sky-lighted hallway on the building’s west side.

Adams started drawing color blocks on his first piece with “little surprises along the way.”

Ideas about unifying Human Services and Environmental Quality concepts – protecting air, land and water; keeping children and families safe – were in the back of his mind. “It’s sort of a landscape, and we see what happens.”

While everything is abstract and painted on industrial aluminum, he sought “more of a human element” for Human Services and “human striving in our culture with experience through space” for Environmental Quality.

The eight pieces are multi-colored, some with vaguely human figures, others using broad strokes of nature, geographic features and bridges.

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